

# Building up the Base Camps



Army engineers, Corps of Engineers civilians and contractor personnel all played a role in building up the Army's Kosovo base camps and getting troops out of tents and into SEAhuts.

**T**HE largest base camp in Kosovo was completed in October 1999, just seven months after NATO forces bombed Serbia and only four months after maneuver units had arrived in-country to restore order.

One-thousand-acre Camp Bondsteel, near Urosevac, today accommodates the equivalent of 350 four-bedroom homes, said Task Force Falcon public affairs NCOIC SSG Blake Waltman.

"On July 1, 1999, tactical vehicles

and tents were the only things on this wheat field," said LTC Tim Gallagher, commander of the 94th Combat Engineer Battalion, a V Corps unit from Schweinfurt, Germany.

Some 900 soldiers from the battalion — augmented by engineers from Fort Riley, Kan., and Fort Lewis, Wash., and Navy Seabees — constructed two communities at Camp Bondsteel, home to some 4,500 U.S. soldiers.

"The challenge when we first got

here was to live on the land we were working on," said Gallagher. "The first month, we moved 4,000 scraper loads of earth and constructed an airfield."

By Oct. 1 the soldiers had built 70 of 120 "SEAhuts" — wooden, open-bay, heated buildings with metal roofs that got soldiers out of tents before winter. Toilets and showers were also recently added to the structures to preclude treks to outdoor toilets and shower tents in the bitter cold.

"Soldiers living in the facilities



## Stories and Photos by Heike Hasenauer



**Bulldozers belonging to 1st Infantry Division engineer units sit on an area of Camp Bondsteel that will later be occupied by helicopter landing pads.**



**Camp Bondsteel is a sea of SEAhuts — the wooden, open-bay, heated buildings with metal roofs that got soldiers out of tents before winter.**

they built can really validate their contribution here when they see how very much the other soldiers appreciate it,” said Gallagher.

“Going from a wheat field to a city with electricity, water, helipads, a chapel, hospital, barber shop, post exchange, MWR facility and dining facilities, is phenomenal,” said COL Robert McClure, commander of the 1st Infantry Division Engr. Brigade, from Würzburg, Germany.

In October, work continued full-speed ahead in preparation for winter.

2LT Margaret Warner worked with a platoon of earthmovers from the 94th’s Company A to build a flight line for a quick-reaction force.

The earthmovers, from Hohenfels, Germany, constructed some 50 helipads for AH-64 Apaches, UH-60 Black Hawks and OH-58D Kiowas that were to move in from Camp Able Sentry in Macedonia.

Work now under way will provide a prefabricated

metal building to be used as a theatre, two large dining facilities and a new hospital, said Dana Finney, an Army Corps of Engineers spokeswoman from Campaign, Ill.

The hospital, a SEAhut-type structure, will provide the same level of care as the 67th Combat Area Support Hospital, but will free up that unit for future deployments.

Soldiers anticipating deployment to Kosovo can be assured that life at the U.S. base camps is not exactly austere — the outposts where they may be

living in abandoned buildings or schools, yes; the base camps, no.

Cell phones and e-mail should function more efficiently than on any previous deployment, said CPT Robert Collins, commander of Co. C, 121st Signal Bn., from Kitzingen, Germany.

The unit maintained the Defense Switched Network (DSN), tactical communications, secure fax, e-mail and video-conferencing capabilities for Camp Monteith and supported more than 100 e-mail users hooked up to the battalion’s server.

The unit also installed “morale phones,” booths with tactical phones that allow soldiers to phone home free of charge at any time, Collins said. □



**A Task Force Falcon soldier makes a call from outside his SEAhut. Soldiers may phone home free of charge at any time.**